

# Public Involvement in the SCORTP Process

## Public Involvement Meetings

Beginning in the spring of 2004 IDPR's Comprehensive Planning staff visited all 44 counties in Idaho and conducted public involvement meetings for SCORTP. The purpose of the meetings was to identify issues and recreational trends so that we could better design our statewide outdoor recreation needs assessment survey. We had 304 people provide us with comments.

## Recreation Provider Focus Groups

In addition, IDPR conducted eight regional focus group sessions with outdoor recreation providers. Again, these were primarily designed to help identify issues and trends for development of the needs assessment survey. One of the questions we asked each group was, "If you could identify one thing that would have the most impact on outdoor recreation, what would it be?" Following is the ranked list from those sessions.

1. IDPR should assume a leadership role in creating a statewide multi-land management agency partnership in recreation planning, focusing on regional recreation management
2. Give issues related to the funding and staffing of recreation a higher profile
3. Increase/improve public access to water recreation, and access to public lands for recreation purposes
4. Create educational/information programs on ethical OHV trail use, and support the launching of a more general national campaign to educate the general public on the land use ethic
5. A more aggressive marketing of the benefits of outdoor recreation to both patrons and decision makers is needed
6. Preserve open spaces that are accessible to the public and available for organized activities
7. IDPR should coordinate the development of operational guidelines for trails from a regional perspective
8. Manage reservoir storage more effectively
9. Studies on the economic impact of recreation on Idaho are a priority need
10. Develop riparian greenways
11. Design simple, updated, inclusive recreation maps for all land management agency areas
12. Create close-to-home, mid-level skill trail systems to improve community connectivity

# Statewide Needs Assessment Survey

## Methodology

In 2002 the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation conducted a statewide survey to assess outdoor recreation needs and gather opinions on a number of issues related to outdoor recreation in Idaho. The agency received enough valid responses (1015) for a confidence level of 99 percent, with a confidence interval of 4.05. While that level of confidence was more than adequate on a statewide survey, we did not receive enough responses from any single region of the state to provide statistically valid results on that level.

As a resource for city, county and recreation district staff, a needs assessment survey is of increasing value the closer it gets to home. Ideally, for instance, a county park and recreation program wants to know the needs of the citizens of that county and, perhaps, adjoining counties. Comprehensive Planning, Research and Review staff set out to design a cost effective survey that would provide statistically valid results at the lowest possible level. Initially, it was our hope to be able to provide analysis on the county level for each of Idaho's 44 counties. To do that would require sending out nearly 50,000 surveys, a prohibitive number because of mailing costs.

Given the resources available, IDPR decided to aim for statistically valid results from each of the six planning regions in Idaho. Even so, traditional survey methods would dictate that we mail around 3,000 surveys per region, or 18,000 surveys. We still needed a more cost effective way of conducting the survey.

IDPR had experimented with Internet surveys in the past and come to the same conclusion most researchers have: web survey results cannot be generalized to the population as a whole. Respondents are usually self-selected, demographically dissimilar to the general population, and biased toward high tech. Still, we like the speed and cost effectiveness of such surveys. We decided to combine the advantage of a randomly selected mailing list with the advantages of Internet responses.

In September and October of 2004 IDPR tested a variety of ways of increasing survey response rates, finally settling on offering respondents an annual parks pass for completing the survey.

In November, the agency mailed 18,000 query cards to Idaho addresses randomly selected by region. Recipients were asked if they would be interested in participating in the statewide survey. Those who were interested had their choice of tearing off a bar-coded card and simply dropping it in the mail, or going immediately to a web page where they could enter the unique password printed on the card, and begin taking the survey. The web survey allowed only one login per password and only one per IP address.

A total of 1,234 chose to complete the survey on line and were successful in doing so. Perhaps 200 more would have done so, but their passwords would not work. This came about because not enough passwords had been loaded into the system for high population counties. Twelve hundred unique passwords for every county were loaded into the system. Staff assumed this would be enough, not taking into account the impact a

high population county would have on randomization in a region. Fortunately, most who had password problems contacted staff by email and were given new, unique passwords. For about 25 potential respondents, this solution did not work. They were permanently blocked from taking the survey by server. Those unfortunate few were encouraged to drop their cards in the mail to receive a printed survey.

It is important to note that when staff received cards requesting paper surveys, the corresponding password printed on that card was checked to see if it had been used, then removed from the web survey's password list, thus substantially reducing the possibility someone could take the survey twice, once by mail and once on the Internet.

Those who responded positively by dropping their bar-coded cards in the mail received a sixteen-page survey and a coupon for a day-use passport to Idaho's state parks. We received 1,080 usable surveys by mail, bringing the total response count for the survey to 2,314 statewide.

While that response rate is relatively low (13 percent), it was not unexpected. In order to bring costs down, we chose to contact potential respondents no more than twice, once with the initial query and again if they responded favorably to that query. A typical survey scenario would have us send a letter introducing the survey, then sending the survey itself, followed by one or more reminders for those who failed to respond. Under that scenario we would have assumed the cost of printing and mailing 18,000 letters and 18,000 16-page surveys, followed by a substantial number of reminders. With this method we sent 18,000 cards, paid business reply rates on about 1,500 responses, then mailed out only 1,500 surveys.

Our goal was to get a response rate from each region that would give us

Region	July 1, 2003 Estimated Population	Valid Responses	Confidence Level	Confidence Interval
1	188,838	341	95%	+ or - 5.3
2	100,348	336	95%	+ or - 5.3
3	582,467	330	95%	+ or - 5.4
4	167,444	391	95%	+ or - 4.95
5	155,393	319	95%	+ or - 5.5
6	171,842	273	95%	+ or - 5.9
Statewide	1,366,322	2314*	95%	+ or - 2.04

\*While there were 2,314 valid responses statewide, only 1990 could be identified by region because of the failure of respondents to include their zip code.

# Executive Summary, Goals and Objectives

The extensive public process used for the 2006-2010 SCORTP, described in the previous section, led the SCORTP Task Force to a number of conclusions regarding outdoor recreation needs in Idaho. Idahoans are worried about continued access to recreation sites, especially on public land. They want to protect water quality and they are concerned about invasive species. Idahoans strongly support natural resource and recreation safety education. They want connecting pathways and close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities.

With dwindling resources available from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Task Force members recognized that making substantial progress on these issues and opportunities will mean that Idaho will first need to find new sources of funding. The outdoor recreation professionals on the Task Force also identified emerging issues that are yet to catch the attention of much of the recreating public, i.e., the closing window of opportunity many communities in Idaho have to acquire land for parks, open space and community pathways, and the growing need for opportunities to increase the physical fitness of residents.

In order to address the identified needs, the SCORTP Task Force developed the following goals and objectives for local, state and federal outdoor recreation providers in Idaho for the next five years.

## **1) Provide enhanced outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities through funding that aligns with demand**

- Improve the LWCF Open Project Selection process to assure needs are recognized
- Institutionalize GIS in the Outdoor Recreation Facility Inventory
- Recognize the importance of undeveloped recreation opportunities
- Conduct regular outdoor recreation needs assessments at the lowest service level funding permits
- Develop new opportunities for public involvement through Internet access and public meetings
- Maintain the “Recreation Next” website to assure planners and land managers are aware of emerging outdoor recreation activities

- Through IRTI or IRPA, create a funding workgroup
- Identify a funding source to implement the STORE program in Idaho
- Identify a dedicated source of funding for nonmotorized recreation
- Work with the Idaho Recreation and Parks Association, cities, counties, NGOs and the education community to develop a STORE funding package for presentation to the Idaho Legislature.
- Work with Idaho's Congressional Delegation to rebuild funding for community recreation
- Seek to build consensus among non-motorized recreationists to identify funding sources for their development, maintenance and management needs on public lands

## **2) Assure that the public has the best possible access to public lands for outdoor recreation**

- Diligently pursue the acquisition, preservation and development of urban open space, parks, trails and corridors
- Sponsor a series of regional forums on the subject to encourage planning and public participation
- Develop a web-based toolkit for elected officials, planners and community activists. Resource tools could include:
  - Forming a recreation district
  - Securing conservation and recreation access easements
  - Best practices for planners
  - Acquisition of development rights
  - Accepting donations
  - Developing planning and zoning ordinances
  - Applying for grants
- Identify and develop strategies to maintain appropriate public access to corridors through programs such as the Federal Side of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Rails to Trails, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Recreation and Public Purposes, and Scenic Byways
- Implement and maintain education and information programs describing appropriate corridor activities, and promoting ethics and stewardship, while emphasizing the link between ethical behavior and continued access

- Assure that access is reasonably convenient
- Develop strategies for better law enforcement on public lands
- Support continued funding for Idaho Fish and Game's "Access Yes!" program
- Strengthen our partnership with the Idaho Association of Counties and the Association of Idaho Cities so that access issues are considered in comprehensive planning
- Consider the impacts exchanges of public land may have on access
- Encourage noise reduction techniques in developed recreation planning so as to preserve the greatest possible access for all recreationists
- Encourage outdoor recreation providers to develop criteria for evaluating and prioritizing access needs and opportunities within their purview
- Recognize that signs, maps, brochures and other information dissemination methods can hinder or enhance access depending on their availability and design
- While protecting access, recognize that there are limits on the number of recreationists and types of recreation our finite public lands can accommodate
- Develop a new vehicle to provide the public with updated, map-based information on access

### **3) Recognize that water is an increasingly precious resource**

- Protect water quality
- Educate recreationists about what they can do to protect the resource
- Fund RV dump stations in areas where they are lacking
- Encourage alternative (non-formaldehyde) RV dump station chemicals
- Provide marine pump-out stations where needed
- Design facilities to decrease runoff pollution
- Continue to operate outdoor recreation facilities within state and federal water quality regulations
- Protect water quantity

- Assure that agency consumptive water rights are legally protected
- Implement water saving techniques in planning and design
- Educate recreationists in water saving techniques
- Monitor and document water quantity as appropriate to track trends
- Seek to protect surface water through instream flows for recreation, aesthetics and species protection
- Closely monitor Snake River Adjudication to assure recreationists needs are considered

#### **4) Develop a unified strategy for delivering outdoor recreation education to the public**

- Designate the existing IRTI multi-agency education workgroup as the lead entity to accomplish this task
- Develop appropriate messages for a coordinated media campaign to promote outdoor recreation ethics
- Determine how to work with the educational community to provide teacher training to fit curriculum needs
- Work with NGOs and corporations to develop joint education campaigns for the benefit of public and private land managers
- Focus more resources of existing educational, interpretive and visitor information staff and facilities on providing education about Idaho's natural resources and the interplay of outdoor recreation with those resources
- Continue an education program for residents on the dimensions and importance of recreation and tourism in the State of Idaho
- Identify funding sources for safety and user ethics education efforts for motorized and especially nonmotorized outdoor recreation activities

#### **5) Minimize the impact of invasive species**

- Include management plans for invasive species in general land management plans
- Coordinate all invasive species control efforts with the state's lead agency on the subject



- Provide education for recreationists
- Promote certified hay
- Promote clean vehicles
- Promote recognition and reporting of invasive species
- Discourage the introduction of invasive species by the public
- Provide information on control methods and importation of inappropriate species to the public

## **6) Encourage healthy living through outdoor recreation**

- Develop stronger partnerships between outdoor recreation providers and public health agencies
- Identify opportunities to encourage healthy living when planning and implementing outdoor recreation programs and developing facilities
- Develop special events to promote healthy activities
- Work with public health agencies to produce educational materials on the topic

## **7) Recognize the importance of transportation in planning projects**

- Encourage alternative transportation systems such as community pathways, bicycle, rail and mass transportation services.
- Improve surface transportation routes connecting communities with nearby recreation and tourism opportunities.
- Maintain Scenic Byways for safe and pleasurable use while not diminishing the characteristics for which the Byway was established.
- Research best practices in planning for human scale transportation and make those practices available to planners and decision makers statewide.
- Encourage the use of context sensitive design in transportation projects